
Article:
Dryburgh, M. orcid.org/0000-0003-2452-2543 (2019) Re-centring education in Manshūkoku (1931–1945): school and family in Chinese oral history. Japan Forum, 34 (2). pp. 248-272. ISSN 0955-5803

https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2019.1684344

Re-Centring Education in Manshūkoku (1931-1945):

School and Family in Chinese Oral History

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Word Count: 11411

Date: October 9, 2019

Abstract: This article explores the ambiguous social experience of occupation in north-east China ('Manshūkoku', 1931-1945) through an analysis of oral histories of education. These works, collected by Chinese and Japanese scholars and published in the early 2000s, highlight complexities to the occupation experience that the starkly polarised national narratives of war typically neglect. Interviews conducted in the city of Dalian (formerly, Dairen) give particular weight to family ambitions and interventions in education. Without openly contradicting orthodox narratives of war, empire and resistance, these oral histories suggest that the hierarchies of occupation were fragmented, uneven in their effects and open to manipulation, and that families exploited these opportunities to build family economic security through tactics of accommodation and appropriation as they pursued personal interests within the occupation school system.

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A nuanced understanding of empire and war in East Asia's twentieth century must reckon with the social experience of occupation as well as with the divisive legacies and unresolved traumas of conflict. Although there is a rich literature devoted to the suffering of civilians and subject peoples as they were directly exposed to military action or forced labour (Morris-Suzuki, 2009; Seraphim, 2006; Soh, 2008), the experience of occupation and cohabitation involved – for some others – more ambiguous engagement with the occupying powers, and this has received less scholarly attention. This ambiguity is particularly striking in areas such as education, where the disciplinary ambitions of the authorities combined with developmental opportunities for the occupied. The wartime occupation and postwar states were remarkably successful in making their master narratives of Manshūkoku education central to the public record (Qi, 2004b, p.60; Tamanoi, 2008, p.181). Thus while one could assume that both the quasi-colonial Japanese wartime rhetoric of development and harmony, and the anti-imperialist Chinese postwar discourse of militarism and 'enslavement' masked a more complex social landscape, for decades after the end of the occupation, there was little foundation in the available sources for a more nuanced understanding.

In the first decade of this century, oral history work offered new perspectives on the experience of schooling in 'Manshūkoku', occupied north-east China. Beside a number of individual interviews, two more substantial collections were published between 2003 and 2005. The larger of these is a Chinese initiative, led by historian Qi Hongshen and based on interviews conducted by teams of Chinese researchers across the north-east in the early 2000s. Qi had worked in Liaoning province since 1984, contributing to the official provincial education history, and publishing numerous works based on the colonial archive before turning to oral history (*Guangmingwang*, 2016). This work – below, the 'Liaoning' project – produced over 1200 oral histories; 400 of these were published in two volumes in China (Qi, 2005a; Qi, 2005b), and fifty were translated by Japanese historian Takenaka Ken'ichi for publication in Japan (Qi, 2004a). This article draws primarily on the smaller project: this is Takenaka's own work – below, the 'Dalian' project – which incorporates sixty oral histories from 110 subjects interviewed in Dalian in the 1990s (Takenaka, 2003).[1]

These oral histories have been little explored in the academic literature, yet they offer new insights into personal relations and social choices for Chinese students in Manshūkoku schools. Whereas earlier research focused on the broad aims and structures

1. Most earlier collections of personal histories on Manshūkoku (including some works on education) were collected as written contributions to the *Literary and Historical Materials* (*wenshi ziliao xuanji*) genre; these typically hew more closely to the Chinese post-war master narrative. A third volume based on Qi's interviews appeared in 2015. Neither Qi nor Takenaka explained how they selected specific histories for inclusion in the published volumes discussed here, though Qi noted that some interviews were vaguer and less focused on individual experience than others (Qi, 2004b, 60).

of education, the oral histories re-centre our understanding of occupation schooling on personal experience, and are more varied, and more ambivalent, than either master narrative can easily accommodate. Takenaka's Dalian interviews echo the broad themes of the Liaoning works; however, they provide more than a simple, Japanese-language expansion on those stories. They offer a distinctive contribution as they sketch a social world of schooling in which families worked to fit hopes for their children's futures to a changing present; and they reveal family reveal engagement with education as tactical, instrumental and conditional on pragmatic judgements on trust and interest.

Both projects were inspired by the observation that the formal archive reflected the intentions of educators (primarily, Japanese educators) and the textbooks designed to structure learning, without exploring Chinese students' experiences or understandings of schooling. Takenaka observed: 'Every document I used in my search for "historical fact" was created by the colonial authorities, and no amount of critical reading on my part would negate this…' (2003, pp.4-6; Takenaka, 2004, p.148; also Tsukinoki, 2006, pp.4-5; Morris-Suzuki, 2009, pp.223-25; Ueno, 1999). He continued: 'Those materials… showed the outlines of colonial education without revealing the massive territory within...' Oral history research was designed to map that territory.

The timing of this work was critical, and both Qi and Takenaka noted that the time for collecting oral histories from those who lived through the occupation, even as children, was running out (Qi, 2004b, p.58; Takenaka, 2004, p.151). On one hand, the decades that had elapsed between the end of the war and the two projects may have blurred some details of the stories; Qi suggested that this had some positive effects, arguing that it left an 'indelible core' of memory more distinctly visible (2004b, p.60). On the other hand, life stories told in 2001 were not subject to the external political pressures that had applied in the decades immediately following the war (SOURCE). This is reflected in the content and delivery of the stories: their framing and language is noticeably less formulaic than some earlier personal histories, and they focus more sharply on personal experience, rather than on the wider national framework of the war.

There are marked differences of framing and of emphasis between the two collections, and some of these probably arise from the specific relationship between historian and informant. As a Japanese researcher, Takenaka encountered some practical constraints on his work: while Qi Hongshen was able to locate potential subjects through institutions such as work units and alumni associations, Takenaka relied on interviewees' personal contacts and pointed to the importance of trust in securing and managing interviews (Qi, 2004b, 60, Takenaka, 2004, p.148-49). That said, both received refusals from potential subjects. The question of positionality here is hard to fathom. Takenaka had turned to oral history in an attempt to escape the embedded positionality of Manshūkoku resources; he noted that this was particularly delicate work for a Japanese scholar, acknowledging the reluctance of many potential subjects to be interviewed and

recognising that he, too, might have declined had the position been reversed (2004, pp.150-51). He did not formally discuss the potential effect of his presence on the content and direction of the interviews – though this has been recognised by Japanese scholars in similar fields (Arai, 2004, pp.126-27, 129) – but noted as a matter of method and ethics the importance of guarding against positional intervention, and leaving control of the discussion in the hands of the interviewee.

Other differences may come from more practical sources. There were practical differences between Dalian and other north-eastern cities in education systems and the opportunities that schools provided, and these will be discussed more fully below. The most significant difference, though, is probably one of framework: Takenaka's subjects lived and attended schools in a city with long-established Japanese presence and a large Japanese population even before the formal occupation; Qi's interviewees more commonly associated Japanese contact with the military invasion of 1931. There were also some differences in questioning strategies. Qi used textbooks as a prompt to start discussions, and his informants gave much more weight to matters of curriculum, ceremony and ideology, and the central relationship that shapes many stories is between the student and the school as proxy of the occupation state. Takenaka made more use of photographs and alumni publications (Takenaka, 2004, p.150), and his interviewees focused more closely on everyday engagements and personal relations with teachers in schools and with families outside.

The core sections of this article will explore this social experience of schooling, working primarily through a reading of 'Dalian' oral histories. To frame that discussion, I will begin by sketching the wider context of colonial education, in social histories of Manshūkoku and the city of Dalian, and in the research on school structures, student population, curriculum and impact. The oral histories lend themselves to two possible reading strategies. Read as individual (part-)life histories, they highlight the range of possible experiences and understandings of occupation education, as these were shaped by the specificities of place, family and everyday contact, and I have selected three stories from the Liaoning collection, and three from the Dalian collection to illustrate the range of stories within each collection and the key differences in emphasis and framing between the two. Read in aggregate, thirty-five further Dalian oral histories reveal experiences and tropes that recur across the cohort.[2] Neither collection claims to offer a 'representative' picture of occupation education; the pool of potential interviewees was

2. The Dalian sample includes sixteen graduates of vocational schools, nine from regular middle schools, four from Japanese schools and nine from girls' schools, and omits nineteen interviews focusing primarily on private schools, higher education and study in Japan. My reading of these works is further informed by a sample from the full Liaoning collection, comprising twenty subjects with experience of higher-level education and work under occupation, plus the full 1921 birth cohort, who were of a similar age to Takenaka's interviewees, had more varied careers but were still educated primarily in Japanese-run schools (Qi ed., 2005a; Qi, 2005b).

filtered by age, by health, and by subjects' willingness to share memories with researchers. All the Dalian interviewees and many Liaoning subjects had received post-elementary education, so had spent longer than was typical in school. There are relatively few interviews with women; this makes it hard to draw very robust conclusions about gender, though we may observe some striking areas of overlap, even within this highly gendered system.[3]

Overall, whereas earlier studies of Manshūkoku highlight the workings of global forces on the puppet state – in the emergence of Asian modernity, or in the collision of imperialism and nationalism – an examination of education through the oral histories shows the everyday frictions of cohabitation. And whereas studies of Japan's formal colonies suggest that, over time, education nurtured professional communities that benefited in very concrete ways from their schooling (Tsurumi, 1977; Lo, 2003), education in Manshūkoku shows us students and families learning to play a new and changing game. Most specifically, the oral histories draw our attention to the tactics (de Certeau, 1984) deployed by students and families in relation to schooling, in their efforts to affirm local solidarities through evasion, defiance and mockery, and, in particular, in their determination to extract material benefits from a system that was designed to create compliant subjects of Manshūkoku. Where Japanese wartime discourses of harmony saw grateful compliance with education, and Chinese postwar narratives emphasised resistance, the oral histories direct our attention to the repurposing of occupation schooling by Chinese students and families.

Japan in Manchuria

In offering a student's-eye view of schooling, the oral histories re-centre our understanding of Manshūkoku on three important areas of experience that are generally under-represented in the English-language scholarship. First, whereas earlier works generally emphasised the political, economic, and military stresses that produced the puppet state (Matsusaka, 2001*;* Morley, 1984; Mitter, 2000), the oral histories focus on the social workings of Manshūkoku. Second, whereas a newer generation of social histories has begun to map Japan's Manshūkoku (Young, 1998; Yamamoto, 2007; Sakabe, 2008; Tamanoi, 2008; Driscoll, 2010; O'Dwyer, 2015), and to reconstruct the social imaginary of occupied Manchuria in civilisational discourse, cultural production and ethnicity (Duara, 2003; Smith, 2007; Shao, 2011), these oral histories place Chinese experience and social practice at centre stage. Third, whereas most histories of Japanese colonial schools in Taiwan and Korea have emphasised education policy (Tsurumi, 1977;

3. Interviews with women comprise 15% of the Dalian stories and 12% of the full Liaoning collection. This imbalance may be due to reliance on gendered alumni and professional networks for recruitment interviewees. Other oral history projects suggest that women are not necessarily less likely to agree to interview.

Chow, 1996; Lo, 2002), these oral histories draw our attention back to the classroom and to the everyday.

The Dalian stories are shaped in part by the local experience of Sino-Japanese cohabitation: education developed within webs of (admittedly unequal) social and economic relations, as well as within frameworks of political and military control. While Dalian was a potent symbol of China's 'national humiliation' in postwar discourse (Hess, 2011), the form – if not the fact – of Japanese control was distinct, and Sino-Japanese engagements were shaped by leasehold arrangements rather than by the 1931 invasion. The Japanese population of the city grew from just over 8,000 in 1906 to nearly 100,000 by 1930, and Japanese companies were central to the city's economy. Chinese elites had some representation in the city council by the 1920s, and some influence through organisations such as the chamber of commerce (O'Dwyer, 2015, pp.50, 156-64, 314); and Sino-Japanese technical co-operation was robust enough to survive into the early 1950s (Ward, 2011; King, 2016).

Recent studies of education in north-east China before and during the occupation have pointed to the methodological and practical challenges presented by an archive in which Japanese sources were freighted with wartime values and official Chinese records 'shed almost no light on what happened to the schools after 1931' (Tsukinoki, 2006; Ōmori, 2008; quotation from Vanderven, 2012, p.166). This remains an emotionally charged area in China, and many Chinese studies continue to characterise Japanese-run schooling in Manshūkoku as 'enslaving education', inseparable from the invasion (J., *doreika kyōiku*; Ch., *nuhua jiaoyu*; Song and Yu, 2016). These difficulties notwithstanding, recent research in China and Japan has produced massive compendia of sources such as textbooks, reports and surveys (Takenaka 2000; Takenaka, 2005) and a growing body of collaborative work that places Chinese and Japanese scholarship in dialogue (Wang, 2000) or translates key works between Chinese and Japanese (Song and Yu, 2016). Recent Japanese-language studies explore the experience of Japanese teachers in Manshūkoku and the postwar legacies of occupation in cross-border alumni networks (Hamaguchi, 2015; Satō, 2016). Chinese scholarship in this area has expanded significantly in the past decade, and the broader studies of the structures and ambitions of occupation education (for example, Li, 2012; still the largest single sub-category) now share space with more focused work on arts and vocational education, and a handful of works on gender and ethnicity (Wang, 2010; Li and Dong, 2013; Zhao, 2015). However, few of these works explore the student experience in depth and, with rare exceptions such as Jiao Runming's study of history textbooks (2008), they draw on the Liaoning oral histories only as an occasional source of factual detail.

Comparisons with Japanese-run school systems elsewhere in Asia are instructive here. Statebuilding in colonial and occupation states involves complex negotiations between metropolitan and local elites (Matsuzaki, 2011), and the management of schools

depended on both educators' shared ambitions and their adaptation of school practice to local conditions. Manshūkoku bureaucrats inherited a Chinese education system that was very different in its reach and ambitions in 1931 to the heavily Confucianised Taiwanese schools of the 1890s (Tsurumi, 1977, pp.8-12). Although Japanese descriptions of north-eastern schools before 1931 emphasised their under-development (Tōa Keizai Chōsakyoku, 1932, pp.464-66), reforms in China after 1895 had created self-consciously 'modernising' schools in which maths and sciences were taught beside more traditional subjects, in which civics instruction mixed old and new concepts and exemplary figures, and in which history textbooks retold China's 'national humiliation' at the hands of imperialist powers, including Japan. Recorded enrolments in these schools grew from below 7,000 across China in 1902 to 3 million in 1912 and around 11.5 million by 1930; in the mainland, unlike in Taiwan, this included growing numbers of girls (Zarrow, 2015, pp.1-3, 13, 178, 200; *cf* Tsurumi, 1977, 27, 63). The north-east followed this wider expansion, and elementary school enrolments rose from 206,607 in 1912 to 807,532 in 1931. Although most schools were concentrated in the more affluent and less isolated Fengtian province (now Liaoning) – the regional impact of that expansion was profound (Takano 2012, p.40; Vanderven, 2012, pp.20-35, 101-24).

Official Japanese reports reflect these developments and suggest some outline similarities between education frameworks in Dalian and the wider region before 1931. In 1927, Japanese research found a recorded student population of nearly 600,000 in Fengtian province across public and private schools (Gaimushō, 1931, pp.584-603). Chinese school enrolments in Fengtian city (now Shenyang) and Dalian alike were close to four percent of the recorded Chinese population (Tōa Keizai Chōsakyoku, 1932, p.13; Gaimushō, 1931, pp.585-94; Kantōchō, 1933, pp.244-47).[4] Fengtian city supported thirteen public elementary schools of varying sizes (the largest with recorded enrolment of 1600 students), ten public middle schools, including industrial, normal, commercial and agricultural vocational schools, nineteen private schools that included a mix of regular, vocational and charitable institutions and twenty community-run 'basic schools' (*jianyi xuexiao*), the last two categories accounting respectively for seven and nine percent of total enrolments (Gaimushō, 1931, pp.585-97). Dalian city offered a similar mix of public institutions for Chinese students; there was also some private provision and a small number of Chinese students attended Japanese-majority schools (Kantōchō, 1933, pp.692-97). Enrolments were lower, schools were smaller, and choices were narrower outside major cities. Overall, the Manshūkoku school system was not a new system created where none had previously existed; rather, it was an expansion and adaptation of existing provision, which was itself fragmented, and playing catch-up with shifts in policy, population and funding.

4. Overall, the two cities had similar-sized populations: Shenyang with 390,624 and Dalian with 367,967.

Research on Manshūkoku schools shows us that elementary school enrolments fell in the first years of occupation, to 502,223 in 1933, but that rising numbers of pupils subsequently passed through schools that were growing in size. Elementary enrolments reached around 2.15 million by 1942, an average participation rate of around 40%, and between 25% and 33% of enrolled pupils were girls. Recorded dropout rates were low – below 7% – and the most commonly stated reason for withdrawal was poverty. Elementary schools expanded, from an average of 50-odd students to nearly 100 by 1940. Many fewer children progressed to middle school, so Takenaka's subjects represented a relatively fortunate minority. Schools were generally over-subscribed, rarely admitting more than 70% of applicants (Takano 2012, p.47; Kurokawa, 2011, pp.128-29, 133). There were some private alternatives, though these were generally smaller schools than their public counterparts. Vanderven (2012, pp.166-67, 154) notes a shift of students towards the more traditional *sishu* schools, with numbers rising from 206 *sishu* in Fengtian province in 1931, to 528 by 1937. Yet *sishu* were small institutions: this is unlikely to account for all of the 'missing' pupils, and most were closed or placed under formal official control in the late 1930s. There were a handful of British, German, French and Danish missionary schools, with around 4,500 students across the north-east in 1929 (Tōa Keizai Chōsakyoku, 1932, p.470; Minshengbu, 1937, pp.28-30).

Education mattered to the occupation state: as in Japan and Taiwan (Cave, 2016, p.1), schooling was designed to create productive and compliant subjects of the empire, and this produced a dramatic shift in ideological content in education, even where school provision echoed earlier practice. The Manshūkoku curriculum emphasised basic skills and orthodox values, and echoed the assimilationist '*kōminka*' policies pursued in Korea and Taiwan (Chou, 1996; Yamamoto, 2006; Hall, 2004). From 1937, elementary schools typically took children at the age of seven for four years; middle schools offered two further years and high schools four; vocational schools – mostly agricultural and technical – ran a four-year curriculum that immediately followed elementary school (Song and Yu, 2016, pp.130-33). Core subjects included Chinese and Japanese language (latterly badged as 'Manchurian' and 'national language' respectively), mathematics, Japan-centred history and geography, physical education, 'ethics' and – at middle school – science. The balance between subjects and between assimilationist and more neutral content shifted over time with local and central political and factional changes in Japan (Hall, 2004). Bureaucratic ambitions were hampered by resource constraints, staff shortages and factional divisions. Despite efforts to recruit staff in Japan or to train Japanese teachers locally, most teachers were Chinese: numbers of Japanese teachers varied between schools, but peaked at just over one third of all middle school teachers in 1939-42, and never exceeded two percent of elementary school staff. This restricted the teaching of language and other key subjects (Hall, 2004, pp.96, 206-07, 258-60).

Through these changes, education remained fragmented and subject to competition between (mostly Japanese) advocates of a more progressive education and bureaucrats closer to the military authorities (Hall, 2004, p.311). This fragmentation may explain the capacity, suggested by the oral histories, that Chinese students and families had to engage instrumentally and selectively with schooling.

Education remained a focus of aspiration for many Chinese families, though the costs involved put school out of reach for many poorer families and presented others with tough choices. While elementary tuition was generally free, most middle schools charged fees, and money needed to be found for books, equipment, travel, uniforms and the opportunity costs of taking an older child out of work; several subjects recall that their families prioritised school fees over warm winter clothing (Takenaka, 2003, pp.212-13, 147). Interviewees remembered middle-school fees ranging from ten to thirty *yuan* at a time when monthly earnings for Chinese adults might be forty *yuan* for an official and ten *yuan* for a shop worker (Takenaka, 2003, pp.22, 34, 108, 204-05). Yet the interviewees' social backgrounds were diverse, ranging from urban entrepreneurs and employees of Japanese companies to factory and retail workers, house-painters and poor farmers; and many families called on assets beyond breadwinner income to keep children in school.

Finally, the impact of education was ambiguous. Within the limits of the quasi-colonial setting, the modernising drive of education enhanced the human capital of the north-east: as in Taiwan and Korea, schooling in Manshūkoku offered opportunity and social mobility for some (Tsurumi, 1977; Lo, 2002; Kang, 2001, pp.24-48). Nonetheless, those potential benefits came packaged with practical and symbolic costs. Messages of colonial inferiority were embedded in language teaching in Taiwan, and alumni of the Manchurian system recall similar reminders of their subordinate status (Holca, 2016; Hall, 2004, pp.57-58; Takenaka, 2003, pp.5, 135, 145; Qi, 2005b, p.174). Lo's study of Taiwanese doctors of the '*kōminka* generation' – born between 1920 and 1930 – underlines the tensions that they experienced between ethnic and hard-won professional identities as social policy became more explicitly assimilationist and as medical professionals were co-opted into the war effort (Lo, 2002, pp.133-37). Takenaka's subjects were of similar age and education, yet they grew up in an order that was newer and more openly contested than colonial Taiwan, and were more closely connected to the open conflict in central China. We should expect their response to Japanese-run schooling to be more ambivalent.

'Enslaving Education' in Liaoning Life Stories

Many of the Liaoning stories depict a rigid school system that was designed to create docile and productive imperial subjects through Japanese language study, a Japan-centred ethics curriculum, and a relative neglect of academic content. In this, they bear

the imprint both of the Chinese master narrative, and of their subjects' experience of places where memory of Manshūkoku was associated more with the shock of invasion in 1931 than with the embedded inequalities of Dalian. The three stories examined below – from Zhu Erchun (male, born 1926), Guan Naiying (female, born 1920), and Chen Yiling (male, born 1921) – indicate the range of usable memories within the wider Liaoning collection. They generally colour within the lines of the master narrative, emphasising student resentment of the constraints imposed by 'enslaving education', despite the risks of open non-compliance. Although they complicate this orthodox story at times, the central relationship of the narrative is of the individual faced with the quasi-colonial school order.

Zhu Erchun's memories (Qi, 2004a, pp.42-51) are a palimpsest of borrowings from the formulaic language of postwar anti-imperialism and vivid personal anecdotes. Zhu came from a poor farming family. He worked as a shepherd until 1937; then, aged nine, he entered his local school in Linghai, south-west of Shenyang. His story is marked by memories of a politicised schooling:

> Colonial enslaving education was made to serve Japanese fascist politics. In order to keep the people in ignorance, and make the Chinese people tools of the system, the Japanese adopted a policy of reducing the number of schools and reducing the length of schooling… (p.42)

Zhu dismissed the modernising claims of the school system, and pointed directly to its ideological ambitions:

> In Japanese class, we read the story of small caged bird that was not bothered by his confinement, but liked it. We can see from this that Japanese wanted to nurture a spirit of servility in Chinese: to get them to serve their masters loyally, and to sing like little birds in a cage without feeling stifled in the darkness and oppression of imperialism. (p.44)

These passages in Zhu's story package personal experience into the tropes of the master narrative. That narrative carried its own promise of restoration: as Zhu concluded, 'Under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, we were resolute in spreading anti-Japanese teachings in order to smash their enslaving education.' (p.51) Yet most of the acts of defiance that Zhu recalls were small; the Party remains distant and abstract in Zhu's story, and his detailed memories of the classroom suggest impotence rather than resolution:

> In class, we didn't dare ask questions, or offer opinions... in the livestock class, we came to the end of the year and still didn't know what the point of the class was. The teacher said that as long as we kept good notes we'd be fine, but we'd have to remember the names of four kinds of pig for the final exam. When we got

> to class, the teacher would draw the four pigs on the board and say thoughtfully that the main differences were in the tail – we were dumbstruck. (p.50)

Despite the promises of the postwar master narrative, the finer details of Zhu's school experience emphasise isolation and a sense of liberation deferred.

Guan Naiying's story (Qi, 2004a, pp.338-346) shares Zhu's emphasis on the restrictions of schooling and underlines the risks of opposition. Born in Andong, on the Korean border, Guan was sixteen when the authorities arrested several hundred local teachers and education officials for anti-Manshūkoku, anti-Japanese activity. Many were tortured, some were executed, and others died of illness in prison. Thereafter, Guan recalled regular school visits by the *kenpeitai* to monitor teachers and students (p.340-41). The violence of the Andong incident framed a personal story of layered inequalities and constraints. While Hall points to instances where liberal educators could mitigate the ideological content of education, and notes that the hours devoted to Japanese language study in Manshūkoku were consistently fewer than in Korea and Taiwan (2004, pp.55, 186-90 and pp.36-37, 158-64), this seems to have meant little to some former students. Guan dismissed ideology in schooling as a fraud, concluding: 'I really resented the [1942] 'Instructions for Citizens', so I didn't learn it then, and can't remember it now.' (p.344) She identified language policy as the 'cruellest' aspect of education: 'Chinese teachers who taught Japanese were not allowed to speak Chinese in class... morning assemblies were all conducted in Japanese. Their objective was to make Chinese forget their own language … and their native land.' (p.345)

In her mainstream academic girls' school, Guan was sheltered from the demands of labour service, but could not escape other gendered pressures. 'Schools had a policy of privileging men over women: women were expected to marry after graduation, become a good wife and wise mother… we were taught that equality between men and women was impossible' (p.346); and she remembered angrily a university teacher who suggested that women would be treated and educated less well under Chinese rule. Nonetheless, Guan taught Japanese language in an Andong high school after graduation. She did not explain that decision, but her story reminds us that, between the high status of teaching work and Guan's distaste for occupation schooling as a system, graduates nonetheless needed to make a living, even if that need could not be built into a seamless narrative.

Chen Yiling's story (Qi, 2004a*,* pp.468-490) offers a telling variation on this theme. Chen grew up in Haicheng, south of Shenyang, and attended local schools before moving to university in Harbin in 1941. He shared Guan Naiying's distaste for the ideological flavour of education, and described the slogans of Sino-Japanese amity and co-prosperity as empty talk that students mocked or ignored (p.473); yet his portrayal of Chinese who worked with the Japanese authorities was ambivalent. These were dismissed in orthodox

narratives as 'traitors' or 'collaborators', yet Chen acknowledged that some might feel constrained and troubled by their position:

> Once, after military training, we were talking to the instructor: he was an army officer – Chinese – and a good man. He pointed to his sword, and said, 'I cut someone with this sword, once… a labourer who was running away.' One student asked, 'Did you have to? Couldn't you just let him go?' He looked all around, then answered, 'Don't go passing this on – the Japanese forced me to.' (pp.476-77)

Chen also suggested that this constraining system could be navigated with pragmatism, and emphasised the resilience of Chinese students who worked in corridors in the evenings and studied in bed to keep warm in winter, their determination to learn fired by a desire to escape military service, or – as they imagined it – to serve a liberated China after the occupation ended (p.478). Whereas we can read the story of Chen's military instructor as a story of the consequences and limits of choices made within the system – having chosen the job, Chen's instructor could not then choose to defy his employers – the stories of study show us students diverting study time to imagined ends that they had chosen, and affirming their solidarity with an imagined future China.

The Chinese master narrative valued above all recognition of the 'enslaving' ambitions of Manshūkoku and resistance to those ambitions, and these Liaoning stories overlap with this narrative in many places. However, they also show student responses that do not fit neatly into the enslavement/resistance binary, and there is a degree of travel between Zhu, Guan and Chen's accounts. Within the shared frame of the arid and constraining school system, they point to responses that range from frustration through accommodation towards appropriation and poaching of the potential benefits of schooling. Thus they re-centre the narrative of education on local solidarities and tactics rather than on the strategies of the occupation, and show Chinese students and teachers facing occupation schooling, unable to change or escape it, but still working to turn it to other purposes.

Dalian Stories: Strikes, Boycotts and Beyond

The Dalian stories echo the Liaoning works as they combine prosaic narrative with pointed references to inequality, conflict and resentment. As in the 'Liaoning' works discussed above, the three stories below – Zhou Fang (male, born 1928), Tian Zhenggong (male, born 1924) and Fan Ruifang (female, born 1929) – highlight variations across the collection both in the experience of education, and in the framing of those memories. While suggesting some differences between schooling in Dalian and other north-eastern cities, they still show a tense and complex relationship between individual and school order. Overall, however, these give less attention than many Liaoning stories

to matters of curriculum; they also complicate the relationship between students and schools by emphasising the roles that family ambitions, family resources and family solidarity played in mediating engagement with education.

Of the three, Zhou Fang's story is most similar to the Liaoning stories sketched above, in its emphasis on constraint and resistance. Zhou's family lived just outside Dalian; he entered Nanjin Academy as a boarder in 1942, and remembered little routine contact with Japanese before then (Takenaka, 2003, pp.68-73). He compared Nanjin to a 'prison', with cramped, unheated rooms, poor food, long hours and no medical care. Richer students brought in extra food; poorer students, like Zhou, could only stare longingly at their classmates' plates. All teachers – apart from the Chinese language teachers – were Japanese; Zhou was regularly beaten for unpunctuality and 'resistance', though he recalled one Japanese teacher who offered extra support to struggling students.

In 1943, Zhou transferred to Dalian Commercial High School. As the war turned against Japan, classes were replaced with 'labour service' and the school increasingly emphasised virtues of 'perseverance' (*nintai*), as Zhou thought, to weaken Chinese students' spirit of resistance. Zhou's classmates covertly circulated works by socially-engaged novelists such as Lu Xun, Ba Jin and Mao Dun, smuggled into Dalian from China proper. This reading – unnoticed by Japanese teachers who understood little Chinese – fostered community and sparked discussions on China's future. Zhou joined protests over the quality of the food, and in 1944/45 was beaten for cheering American B29s as they bombed a factory where students had been working. Earlier in the war, this would have been punishable by expulsion, and the lesser penalty was read as a hint that the Japanese teachers too thought the war was nearly over (Takenaka, 2003, pp.72).

Tian Zhenggong's history echoed those tales of anger and protest, while also pointing to the ability of richer students to mobilise family connections to their own advantage (Takenaka, 2003, pp.27-32). Tian was born in Jinzhou district, Dalian, entered Nanjin Academy in 1931 and later attended Lushun High School. Tian recalled a Japanese teacher dragging a Chinese pupil from a classroom and whipping him in the corridor for mocking the story of the sun goddess Amaterasu; the school expelled another student who reported the same teacher for selling school rations on the black market. The Chinese students reported the teacher to the school principal and the local authorities, and launched a strike that ended only after mediation by the father of one of the strikers, then chair of the Dalian Chamber of Industry and Commerce.

Returning to school, the strikers were summoned to a 'reflection meeting' at which a weeping principal tried to impress on them how seriously the school took the strike; one student was expelled and the entire year group received a final C-grade. This grade should have ended their formal education; it prevented Tian from gaining entry to

Lushun Industrial University, but still allowed him to take up a place at an industrial college in Tokyo. Of the two strike leaders, one was drafted into the army, where he suffered for his reputation; the other moved on, apparently unscathed, to medical school. Within the school, some reprisals were thwarted by Japanese teachers: one resigned in protest, and another sheltered student protesters from the *kenpeitai*. As Tian's story celebrated righteous protest against the system, it also highlighted the resources – in the social capital of their parents, and the distaste that some Japanese teachers felt for abuses in the system – that allowed some students to move from covert to open defiance.

Fan Ruifang grew up on the outskirts of Dalian (Takenaka, 2003, pp.157-62) and attended school from the age of eight. When she won a place at the prestigious Japanese Shōwa Girls' High School, her father, a teacher, borrowed money from relatives to pay her tuition fees. The loan did not cover boarding fees, so she continued her daily commute of over an hour, morning and evening, once walking to the bus station in cloth shoes worn through at the soles, and arriving at school with bleeding feet. Fan had affectionate memories of a maths teacher who helped her with Japanese and sometimes invited her home to eat, but also recorded slights and injustices. It was an 'economic crime' for Chinese to eat white rice, so Fan's lunch consisted of sorghum and garlic vegetables. As she opened her lunchbox, her Japanese classmates would move away, complaining of the smell. She often ate in the corridor to avoid them, until her parents allowed her to take a more expensive meal of steamed bread with plain vegetables.

Other tensions were harder to resolve. Fan and her Chinese peers boycotted classes after a Japanese teacher, known for his contempt for the Chinese students, slapped a Chinese girl for some lapse in showing 'reverence to the East' (bowing towards the imperial palace in Tokyo), and broke her glasses. Here again, the Chinese student's family status was decisive, and after mediation by class teachers failed, the school authorities ordered the teacher to visit their home to apologise. Fan recalled no punishments for the boycott; it may have been treated as less serious – possibly, less political - than Tian Zhenggong's Lushun High School strike. Like Tian, Fan shows a shifting balance of power in schools: Fan could build her own relationships with classmates only by fitting in – by taking the right lunch – and this acceptance came at some cost; yet schools too were subject to constraints, and some of these came from the status of their Chinese students' families.

These three Dalian stories can all be invoked to support the Chinese master narratives of the occupation. They recall that Chinese students resented inequities and resisted school myths and observances; and they echo the Liaoning stories in their references to students' 'making do' within the system. However, they also deliver more complex insights into a school system that was socially embedded and shaped in the everyday by personal relations with teachers and peers, and they give more weight to family engagement with education. It is wholly unsurprising that parents worked to keep their

children well fed, and in school, as far as they could afford to; but the Dalian stories foreground – in ways that the Liaoning stories do not – the role of family as a resource, and the effect of family status on student experience.

The Social World of Schooling

The stories of the wider Dalian collection focus above all on the personal engagements that shaped life within quasi-colonial structures, and thereby suggest greater fragmentation in the occupation order and more space for student tactics within the Manshūkoku game. Practical matters of food and movement were often framed relationally, as markers of status and community, and the stories give much less attention to practical matters than to remembered relations with peers and teachers. The role of families in this enterprise of 'getting along', and 'poaching' on the system was reflected with particular clarity. The trope of community-forged-in-shared-suffering is a very familiar one; but the Dalian stories insist that community was a resource as well as a consolation, and this decisively shifts the central relationship of the stories. Within schools, students were often pragmatic in building relations with Japanese teachers; outside school, families worked to ease students' path through the school system, and students and graduates mined the benefits available within the system to repay actual and symbolic debts and to strengthen those communities.

As the Dalian stories centre on the everyday in Manshūkoku schooling, they underline the importance of relationships, as well as structures, to remembered experience. Access to space - to territory - and to material goods marked the boundaries between Chinese and Japanese communities: some subjects remembered 'no-go' areas in the city, as Chinese were barred from some Japanese-run shops, and Chinese children were harassed as they travelled to school through primarily Japanese residential areas (Takenaka, 2003, pp.17, 40, 45, 57, 60, 62, 77, 101-02, 108, 113, 117, 138, 140, 148-49). Food, too, marked both hierarchy and community. Zhou Fang's memory of receiving food full of pig bristles and maggots expressed both physical disgust and political shame, as it underlined Chinese students' inferior status (Takenaka, 2003, pp.170, 182). For others, though, food was more ambiguous. Many girls learned cookery in Dalian's schools; this was both an opportunity to show their skills in making Chinese food, and a confrontation with difference, in the remembered feel of sashimi in the mouth and their Japanese classmates' comments that Chinese students' lunches 'looked like birdseed' (Takenaka, 2003, pp.170, 176, 182). They recognised, too, that cookery, like etiquette, sat within a domestic education that aimed to spread Japanese-inspired practice to Chinese girls and thence into Chinese homes. Unlike Guan Naiying, though, Takenaka's female subjects generally recall classes in Japanese cookery and etiquette more as an oddity than as an affront: they recalled feeling that their Japanese teachers were 'very stiff and formal',

and remembered having to be helped to their feet by Japanese classmates after long periods of sitting *seiza* (Takenaka, 2003, pp.170, 176-77, 180, 186, 198).

Small communities and personal relations were also central to protest and resistance. Very few subjects remembered Communist Party activism (Takenaka, 2003, pp.23, 61, 85, 104, 123), and there are few references to violent incidents (Takenaka, 2003, pp.18, 22-23, 36, 39-40). As in Tian Zhenggong's story, strikes and boycotts were often provoked by abuses of power: students assumed that, even under occupation, some form of moral contract governed schools' behaviour (Takenaka, 2003, pp.22, 45, 109, 192-93). More commonly, though, Takenaka's subjects recalled smaller acts of non-compliance, evoking persistent mockery of daily school rituals – which was fairly common even in Japan at this time (Cave, 2016, pp.22-24) – and a stubborn defiance that ranged from covert disrespect – as students '…used to crush the bed-bugs in the dorms, and say they were crushing the Japanese' – to slacking and sabotage on labour service (Takenaka, 2003, pp.17, 35-36, 39, 57, 61, 123-24). Even apparently political episodes were framed in personal terms: Zhou Wulu – required as a twelve-year-old to take part in torchlit parades to celebrate Japanese victories in Shanghai and Nanjing – remembered feeling breathlessness rather than a sense of political injustice; Pei Shuhua remembered the same parades above all for the sweets that students received afterwards (Takenaka, 2003, pp. 139-40, 144, 191, 205).

This experience of constraint was shaped in important ways by gender and by seniority. Women generally remembered closer personal relations with their Japanese teachers: Xue Xiuying made New Year's visits to her principal at home, and described her female teachers as role models (Takenaka, 2003, pp.174). Girls' education also confronted them with the costs of war for Japanese: Zhao Ming's class went to deliver care packages to injured Japanese soldiers and were struck by the troops' disillusion with the war; other women recalled teachers who had sent husbands and sons to fight, or who had themselves been injured in service (Takenaka, 2003, pp.171, 186-87, 198). Hierarchies in school also shifted as pupils progressed through the system: while the Manshūkoku stories do not show the close master-disciple relationships that marked higher medical education in Taiwan (Lo, 2002, pp.57-59, 123, 127), the communities of higher education appeared more flexible. One interviewee noted pointedly that this may simply have been a pragmatic effort to keep Chinese students compliant, though pupils too may have worked instrumentally to exploit differences within the authorities by cultivating good relations with potentially sympathetic teachers (Takenaka, 2003, pp.126-27).

At all levels of schooling, though, relations with teachers as individuals, were significant. Chinese teachers played an important role in raising morale and building peer networks and ethnic community (Takenaka, 2003, pp.34, 38, 45, 51): He Benquan's Chinese-language teacher said of the occupation, 'There is no night without dawn'; Gao Jilin's middle-school form teacher, who taught students patriotic songs in the evenings, once

told his class, 'China has such a huge population - all we need to do is kill one Japanese each.' (Takenaka, 2003, pp.112, 117, 219, 209). At the same time, the Dalian stories distinguish, more fully than the Liaoning works, those Japanese teachers who were remembered with respect or affection from those who were not. They recall declining teaching quality as the war progressed, and distrust of Japanese teachers who were dismissive of Chinese students, or simply uninspiring (Takenaka, 2003, pp.17, 35, 45, 56, 113, 144). However, they remember others who worked to support pupils who struggled with Japanese language, or to enthuse the more ambitious - Guo Minxin and Chen Baozhong recorded memories of sketching trips outside school and evening visits to the shore to see phosphorescent sea creatures (Takenaka, 2003, pp.21, 61-62, 46, 50, 55-56, 96, 102, 108, 134, 209). These were not so much victories over the Manshūkoku order as moments of reprieve; though there are enough stories of teachers who appeared politically supportive of Chinese students to suggest that some saw sincerity behind these actions.

In these stories, Chinese students' engagement with schooling appears to have been largely tactical. Unable to command space or material resources, some resorted to furtive defiance of the system or offered an appearance of compliance with the school order while withholding consent; others softened the stresses of school life by cultivating personal relations with peers or trusted teachers. On the face of it, the benefits generated by these tactics were symbolic rather than practical; many were ephemeral or were deferred to some imagined postwar. That picture changes if we turn our attention to family engagement with schooling. This was more future-oriented, and more ambitious, than other tactics: while student tactics aimed to reorganise resources within the school system, this family-facing engagement drew resources out of education, as students diverted time in school to develop their own capabilities and confirm family solidarity and security.

The three Dalian stories sketched above show families as key players in the challenge of 'getting along' both socially and economically, and underline the influence of family status and resources on school experience. While Taiwanese schooling was central to assimilation and identity change by the 1930s, particularly among students whose parents had themselves probably been educated under Japanese colonialism (Tsurumi, 1977, pp.157, 177; Lo, 2003, p.137), the Dalian stories show a society where these changes had barely begun, and where parents worked pragmatically to equip their children to navigate this changing landscape.

This navigation depended on public mastery of the new social scripts of Manshūkoku, and on private recognition that those scripts did not tell the whole story. Thus Zhang Lianmin's father ordered him to study hard and stay out of politics; Liu Shunming was rebuked for asking how so few Japanese were able to rule so many Chinese; Guo Minxin was ordered never to repeat his observation that the local Japanese policeman bore no

resemblance to the benevolent figure described in his language textbook. The work that began at home extended into wider and more public networks: some recall Chinese officials struggling to coach local people in the officially approved use of ethnic categories: who was 'Manchurian'? Who was 'Japanese'? What did it mean to be from 'Kantō'? (Takenaka, 2003, pp.54, 83, 96, 180, 214, 222) At the same time, Dalian families might also have professional or family connections that embedded students in networks beyond Manshūkoku. The families of Shandong migrants were connected to sources of illicit books and of war news that allowed them to see the silences and omissions in Japanese news about China; and relatives who had seen the Jinan Incident – where Japanese forces in north China and Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition armies clashed in May 1928 – passed their distrust of the Japanese on to their children (Takenaka, 2003, pp.16-17, 45, 56, 59-60, 75, 81, 122, 197).

Family engagement with schooling was also driven by economic imperatives, and these remind us that education was not just a quasi-colonial imposition: it was a source of opportunity, a focus of aspiration and an investment in an order that was not yet encompassed by the occupation. Many students came from poorer families who were determined to put their children through school, despite the challenges they faced. Mu Zhuanbao's father was a poor farmer, and Mu was sixth of seven children. His first brother worked as paid companion to a blind person; the second worked in a Japanese-owned shop until his death 'of overwork and illness' at age twenty; the third attended a local elementary school for four years, but had to leave when the family could no longer cover his fees, after which he worked as a domestic servant; the fourth brother and older sister worked on the farm; the younger sister worked in a restaurant. When Mu was eight, with two of his older siblings earning, his family were finally able to send him to school. 'With the weight of family expectation on his shoulders', Mu went through elementary and middle school and on to a Mantetsu technical training unit, and worked on neighbours' farms in the summer holidays to support himself (Takenaka, 2003, pp.212-14).

Many families, like Mu's, relied on scholarships, loans and gifts from relatives or family friends to cover fees, or skipped meals to fund book purchases (Takenaka, 2003, pp.21-22, 74-75, 90, 202-03, 205). Where family resources covered tuition but not peripheral expenses – notably boarding or travel costs – students were nonetheless expected to make do somehow. Long journeys to school - daily for students who could not afford to board, sometimes on foot where families could pay boarding fees but not weekly bus fares, in summer and in winter – were fairly common (Takenaka, 2003, pp.49, 90, 97, 148, 179). Some of the choices and transactions involved here appeared straightforward: Pei Shuhua applied to the Women's Normal Division of Lushun High School as it charged no fees and allowed her to pursue her childhood dream of becoming a teacher; when Zhou Wulu's father died, bankrupt, a family friend stepped in to pay for his education

(Takenaka, 2003, pp.192, 153). For others, the financial stresses of schooling came packaged with emotional costs. Zhang Lianmin's father 'spent everything he had' to put his son through school; Wang Shuliang's mother's relatives loaned money to cover his middle school fees, even though Wang's father would have happily seen his son return to the family farm when he left elementary school; Liu Jixing's extended family resorted to division of family property when they could not agree whether to fund his school fees out of shared resources (Takenaka, 2003, pp.49, 85, 97, 139). But parents wanted to see their children in school because they were ambitious for them or for the family, because they felt that schooling put them in tune with the spirit of the time, or because they regretted their own lack of education; and Yang Xinyuan's brother wept for 'two days and two nights' when family poverty forced him to quit school. (Takenaka, 2003, pp.74, 85, 89, 134-35).

Memories of work affirm that students expected to repay that investment. Mu Zhuanbao and Sun Haizhu both chose to attend Mantetsu-affiliated training units that provided a trade without charging fees, and both later worked for Mantetsu subsidiary companies. Like He Benquan, employed at the Manshū Savings Bank, they recalled that their first thought on getting paid was to hand the money to their parents. Women, too, expected to work to repay their parents: Zhao Ming took a post office job, and Zhang Cuiyun, whose greatest work ambition was to avoid factory work, trained as a teacher because she could save money from the monthly normal school bursary to send to her family (Takenaka, 2003, pp.44, 85, 153, 171, 204-05, 215, 219). These stories re-centre the family – and not the occupation order – as the primary intended beneficiary of Manshūkoku education.

That said, some choices were harder to explain on these terms. Han Fang'e worked briefly as a clerk and translator in a chemicals factory after leaving Dalian Girls' High School. She remembered the 'militarised' atmosphere of the unit, and soon learned that the products were dangerous; but she left – telling her manager she was getting married – only when she heard news of Japanese military action against civilians in Shandong and the killing of her own relatives. Despite his parents' investment in his education, Wang Shuliang turned down opportunities to work as a military translator, to study in Japan or to find a post with a Japanese company in Lushun; instead, he took a job on a local agricultural co-operative until the end of the war (Takenaka, 2003, pp.51, 187). Lo's study of Taiwanese doctors (2002, pp.131-36) points to the difficulties that some experienced in packaging their own professional ambitions with the colonial and wartime uses of medicine into a smooth personal narrative. For these seven Dalian subjects – all of whom worked in some capacity for the occupation order – this was not simply a practical way of maximising family benefits within past constraints; it also offered a narrative framework that morally detached those choices from the priorities of the

occupation state, provided that the family benefits gained outweighed the symbolic costs of engagement with the Manshūkoku order.

The end of the war brought a genuine sense of liberation for some, but tensions and ambivalence for others. Han Fang'e felt relief that she had resigned her work in the chemical plant, Zhang Xun threw herself in CCP activism under her brother's guidance, and Zhou Fang chose to avoid future contact with Japanese who remained or who later visited (Takenaka, 2003, pp.72, 188, 198). Some Manshūkoku alumni kept in touch with former teachers and classmates for years or built careers in dealing with Japan: Yang Zhenya joined the Foreign Ministry and was Ambassador to Japan in 1988-1993 (Takenaka, 2003, pp.23, 25, 31, 64, 86). For others, the legacies were more difficult: Di Yongkang suffered criticism and forced labour for his Japanese education and association with prominent Chinese collaborators; Sun Qiangli - who took part in the post-war cataloguing and preservation of materials left behind by Mantetsu - was banished to the countryside with his family during the Cultural Revolution for his 'illicit dealing with a foreign power' (Takenaka, 2003, p.145). Han Qiufang[5] found herself caught between family and political loyalties: after her father was killed by the Japanese authorities supporting the Chinese war effort, Han promised her mother never to work with the Japanese. In 1945, though, the new Chinese local government in Dalian ordered Han to assist in the repatriation of Japanese civilians, insisting that civilians should not be held responsible for the actions of the armies. Han never told her mother, but could not shake the feeling of having betrayed her family (Takenaka, 2003, p.65).

Conclusions

These stories suggest a social history of Manshūkoku schooling that cannot neatly be encompassed within the quasi-colonial Japanese rhetoric of the time or the anti-imperialist Chinese narratives of the postwar. They complicate the stark binaries that mark some histories of the war – China/Japan, victim/oppressor, compliance/resistance – and show that a complex web of transactions surrounded schooling. They thereby offer a more nuanced understanding of the colonial and wartime past, and underline the variations across time and space within Japanese-run education. As Lo's study of medical graduates reveals, Taiwanese students of the 1930s and 1940s passed through a relatively well-established school system, supported by parents who had themselves been educated under Japanese colonial rule. The most highly educated could achieve wealth and status, for example, as doctors, but had to figure also with the co-optation of these professions into Japan's war effort. North-easterners, however, lived in a more overtly military order and had fewer educational opportunities but were also more closely connected through their families to the world before and beyond Manshūkoku. Their

5. Han's story appears as a postscript to the interview with her husband, Yang Zhenya.

stories suggest that, within the political frameworks of occupation, hierarchies were fragmented, open to some limited manipulation, and ambiguous in their effects, and they emphasise the importance of family engagement to the experience of education.

Whereas the Liaoning stories generally explore the exercise of individual agency and resilience in the constraining environment of education, the Dalian stories focus more often on the family as community, on the tangible and intangible resources that families used to further their children's education and on the tactics through which they exploited those resources. In these stories, students were recipients and future sources of family money and status, as well as passive or resentful subjects of 'puppet' Manshūkoku, families made purposeful and instrumental educational decisions, and teachers acted as private citizens as well as proxies of the occupation state. This shift in the framing of the oral histories complicates the familiar themes of violence, constraint and resistance. The sharp focus on school and classroom that is characteristic of the Liaoning stories shows a range of tactical engagements between students and schools, in acts of evasion and defiance (often covert), in students' creation of alliances and networks of peers and in their cultivation of relations with more sympathetic Japanese teachers; this also underlines students' precarious status within the system and the provisional nature of many of these tactical gains. This is echoed in the Dalian stories, but these also show, with far greater clarity than the Liaoning works, the role of families in shaping engagement with education, and this demands that we reconsider the wider meanings of individual students' stories.

I have characterised these engagements as tactical. Many appear to offer, at best, symbolic compensation for the collective pain of defeat and occupation; this should not, however, suggest that engagement with education secured nothing material and created no profit, aiming only to affirm efficacy and solidarity. Instead, the Dalian stories show that access to education, and defence against some of the frictions of education, depended on money; the material was central to family decisions. Thus, family responses aimed to build something more durable: in the medium term, schooling channelled material benefit toward the family and affirmed solidarity by enhancing family economic security. These were tactics, in short, that aspired to something more strategic.

The orthodox Chinese narratives of Manshūkoku schooling might explain the act of sending a child to school as an act of compliance – reluctant or willing – and the Liaoning stories often treat this as a prelude to the main drama of students' engagement with the occupation order. Much depends on assumptions that we cannot read directly from the oral histories: if families had seen education as accessible, or imaginable for their children without the occupation, and if they expected that occupation would be short-lived (Vanderven's work on north-eastern schools, and the evidence of the oral histories suggest that both were possible), then their engagement with Manshūkoku schooling looks pragmatic, and rooted in traditional understandings of the benefits of education,

rather than narrowly passive or compliant. What we can see is that families worked and scrimped and borrowed to enhance their children's earning capacity and their own security, and their determination may be better read as the pursuit of what limited advantage was available than as a surrender to the system. That engagement was conditional: some graduates and families were willing to take an income that came from teaching, or from Mantetsu, but not from work that was more visibly connected to the military. The occupation authorities had set the scene for these stories and could not be written out of them, but it was the student and the family who were central to the action.

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